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LUTHER'S ATTITUDE TOWARD WELLERISMS¹

by

James C. Cornette, Jr.

The Wellerism is a curious proverbial type. Its origin is unknown, but it is not as old as the proverb, for the humor and meaning of a Wellerism depend upon the presence of a proverb or trite saying in incongruous surroundings. No universally accepted name has ever been hit upon either in English or in German for this phenomenon of folk expression, although it is very well represented in the oral tradition of both languages. It derives the name "Wellerism" from Samuel Weller, the odd and humorous character in Charles Dickens's *Pickwick Papers* who made frequent use of such expressions. In Germany it is known under the names of *Sagwort* and *Beispielspruchwort*. The essential characteristics of the Wellerism are, first, a proverb or common saying followed by "quoth the Deyil" (or some other individual), and secondly, humor arising from the combination of a serious assertion with a completely inappropriate scene. The tendency of many Wellerisms is to introduce the uncouth or the obscene.¹

Not often is a moral lesson attached to a Wellerism. In fact, the reason for quoting one is usually to create a humorous or ridiculous atmosphere, or to give uncouth emphasis to the proverb or cliché. All that is expected from the reader or the hearer is that he laugh. Compare for example, the quite modern: "Delighted, no end," said the lightening bug, as he backed into the electric fan.

Friedrich Seiler in *Das deutsche Lehnwort* gives evidence to show that the Wellerism existed in classical antiquity.² It seems practically to have disappeared during the Middle Ages. Perhaps this is due to the very fact that, because of its nature, it was not

¹ Archer Taylor: *The Proverb*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts. 1931, pp. 200 ff.

² Seiler, Friedrich: In the series, part VIII, *Die Entwicklung der deutschen Kultur im Spiegel des deutschen Lehnworts*. Halle a. d. S., 1924, pp. 3 ff.

recorded during an age when the clergy controlled most of the transmission of knowledge and when proverb collections were made mainly because of the moral lessons to be gained from them. Archer Taylor says of the use of the Wellerism during the early part of the sixteenth century:

For at least two reasons Wellerisms found no place in the earliest collections; in the first place, these collections are by south German authors who had little or no opportunity to know Wellerisms; and in the second place, the aims of these collections conflicted with the characteristic temper and tone of Wellerisms. The peculiar qualities which characterize the form, its often obscene humor and its lack of a moral or didactic turn, render it unsuitable for school use. According to Seiler Luther believed the Devil was hostile to proverbs and seduced people by turning them into an evil form, the Wellerism. It is clear from Luther's marginal notes to his collection of proverbs that he regarded Wellerisms as malicious perversions, but there is no convincing evidence that Luther regarded Wellerisms as the work of the Devil.³

I am inclined to agree with Seiler and to think that Luther's statement in his marginal notes to his proverb collection, namely, "per-versa omnia a diabolo," was meant to be quite serious and literal. The Devil was very real, even corporeal, to Luther.

In treating Luther's use of Wellerisms it is necessary to emphasize his abundant use of proverbs in general. They were not, of course, coined by him; he was merely using expressions which were current. He uses them to a certain extent in his sermons and in his explanations of the scriptures, but he uses them much more frequently in his writings directed against the Catholic Church, the Pope, or single individuals. His discussion of the one hundred and first Psalm is a notable exception to this statement. On the whole he uses the proverb very often in his polemics.⁴ Also many more proverbs appear in his *Tischreden* than in any of his writings. The proverbs there also are more frequently vulgar or obscene. Perhaps one might account for this by the fact that Luther did not himself write down the *Tischreden*. They are reported to us by some of

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 205 f.

⁴ See below in the alphabetical list under *Vieh*.

his table companions.⁵ These men may have taken liberties with what Luther said or may have added to the original. It is highly probable that they not only added to what Luther said, but that they also may have increased the number of the proverbs attributed to him. Of course they kept the sayings of Luther in their personal dairies. He may have used many expressions which we today would consider crude, but which in the sixteenth century were more commonplace. And even had he now and then repeated some common crudity in the presence of only his boon companions, it would be no contradiction to his belief that such expressions were the work of the Devil when repeated so often as to lead the common man astray. As a matter of fact, he spoke of many of them as being perversions.⁶ A man with the dynamic personality such as Luther had is inclined to frequent outbursts of zeal and sometimes uses much stronger expressions than he would were he to deliberate long over what he should say. I firmly believe that the Great Protestant objected to the obscenity of these proverbial expressions. A slight evidence of this is to be seen throughout his manuscript collection of proverbs, which of course he never even intended for publication. Luther had criticized rather sharply other contemporary collections, especially that by Agricola, because they included too many expressions not intended to be didactic but which were merely included to make the works popular. The collection published by Johannes Agricola in 1529, one of the most important proverb collections of the century and one which is still valued by proverb scholars of today, caused the Great Reformer to make the following statement:

⁵ Johann Hatesius in his *Das Leben Des theuren Mannes GOTTes* [sic] Doct. Martin Luthers . . . Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1724, reports (1540), p. 341 f.: "Unser GOTT schicket mich diss Jahr, durch Beförderung D. Justi Jonä und M. Georg Rörers, an D. Luthers Tische, darfür ich meinem GOTT, und meinen Fordern, die Tage meines Lebens zu dancken habe. Was ich da hörete und sahe, habe ich mit Fleiss gemercket, so bescheret mir GOTT, durch fleissiger Leute Hülffe, viel guter Colloquia und Gespräche, so zuvor Veit Dietrich von Nürnberg, D. Weller von Freyburg, Er Antonious Lauterbach von Birna, und hernach M. Caspar Heyderich Superintendent zu Torgau, M. Hieronymus Besold von Nürnberg, M. Plato, und andere des Doctors Kostgänger, hatten aufgeschrieben. Ferdinandus a Mautis aus Oesterreich, hat auch viel Auslegungen über etliche Sprüche in seine Bibel verzeichnet, wie M. Georg Rörer viel köstliches Dinges von Schriften und Ratschlägen, und sonderlich was bey der Dolmetschung der Bibel geredet war, sehr fleissig zusammen gebracht hat."

⁶ See D. Martin Luthers *Werke, Tischreden*, Weimer, Hermann Böhlhaus Nachfolger, v. 3, 352, entry 3487. The close parallel between the *perversa* in Luther's private collection and the discussion of them in this entry made in 1536 by A. Lauterbach, one of the most reliable reporters among Luther's table companions, is conspicuous. Luther must have made the entries 74-78 in his proverb manuscript some time during 1536, and then he probably discussed them as evil at his table.

Es ist ein fein ding vmb proverbialia Germanica, vnd sindt starcke beweisung, vnd wer fein das einer sie zusammen lese, ut ferunt Episcopum⁷ fecisse. M. Grickel hat nur pöschchen vnd flugs zusammen gelesen, damitt er ein gelechter anrichtett; man muste die bössen [i.e., besten] nemen, die ein ansehen hetten. Der Teuffel ist auch den spruchwörtern feindt, drumb hat er seine geister dran geschmirtt wie an vill spruch der schriefft, damitt ers mit seim spott verdecktig machte vnd die leut davon furett. Wir müssen aber den Teuffels dreck daruon thun vnd die spruchwörter erretten. Ut barbati praedicant: Docet honorem esse tribuendum canitie; da hat er den dreck dran geschmirtt: Sagt der Teuffel: Wirff ein pock die stiegen hinab! Sic: Alber fest cum braca; non semper olim; wers kan dem kumpt.s.⁸

In these words Luther not only expresses his disgust with Agricola, whom he later bitterly criticized, but, and more important, his deep love for the proverb and his desire to make popular the use of only the most morally acceptable expressions. Here we have the same as in Luther's own words his statement to the effect that he believed the Wellerism to be the work of the Devil. Is not this sufficient evidence for us (and for Mr. Taylor) that he considered them as such? I believe that it is, especially when taken in connection with the conspicuous lack of the Wellerism in his own writings.

In spite of the above statement criticizing Agricola, Karl Reuschel⁹ maintains that Agricola was the spur and source for Luther's own proverb collection, which was probably started at some time about 1536 or just before then,¹⁰ and that the bitter judgment on the part of the latter dates from a later year, just after the anti-monistic dispute. It is true that Luther knew of the first two Agricola editions, at any rate, both published in 1529. He wrote to Justus Jonas concerning the first one: "Prouerbia 300 Germanica Eislebensis edita sunt locupletibus comentariis."¹¹ This certainly

⁷ E. Kroker in a foot note, T5, p. 62, says: "Wer ist das? Ein *Episcopus* wird auch in Nr. 5261 genannt. In unsrer Rede denkt man zunächst an Sebastian Franck, dessen Sprichwörterammlung erst im nächsten Jahre 1541 in Frankfurt a. M. erschien, doch könnte Luther ja schon 1540 davon gehört haben. Aber wie wäre Franck zu dem Spitznamen *Episcopus* gekommen?" Perhaps *Episcopus* refers to either Nicolaus or Eusebius Episcopus, who were contemporary printers in Basel associated with Frobenus, the printer of Erasmus's *Adagia*.

⁸ Luthers *Tischreden*, v. 5, p. 62, November 5-7, 1540. Hereafter the *Tischreden* will be referred to by T plus the volume number.

⁹ *Euphorion*, VIII (1901), 164.

¹⁰ See *supra*, footnote 6.

¹¹ D. Martin Luthers *Werke, Briefe*, Weimar H. Böhlau Nachfolger, 1930-1938, v. 5, p. 55, April 19, 1529. Hereafter the letters will be referred to by

seems to be nothing more than an acknowledgement of the work of a friend. In September of the same year (1529) Luther wrote both a letter of consolation to Agricola and one to Graf Albrecht von Mansfeld. They deal with numbers 56 and 115 of Agricola's collection, as well as with two other places in the discussion which were derogatory to the exiled Herzog Ulrich von Württemberg. Let use quote a portion from the letter to Graf Albrecht: "Ich will itzt M. Eislebens Sachen nicht verteidigen, als wenig ich hindern will, ja auch foddern, dass er noch mehr deutsche Sprüchwörter lässt ausgehen . . ." ¹²

The friendly relations between the two men, which became clouded because of the antimonistic quarrel when Agricola came to Wittenberg from Eisleben in 1536, were completely destroyed in 1540 (August 15), when, in order to escape arrest, Agricola fled from Wittenberg to the court of Kurfürst Joachim III in Berlin. The unfriendly statement of Luther came about two months thereafter, during the first week in November, 1540.¹² Luther seems to have objected, not to those proverbs which we today would consider most vulgar, but rather to what he termed "pöschchen vnd flugs." These proverbial curses irritated the reformer. They are of the type of the Wellerism in so far as their general tone is concerned. At times, when one reads through Luther's writings, one is inclined to think that, perhaps, it is another case of the "pot's calling the kettle black." On the other hand, as we have seen, one must take into consideration the fact that Luther's collection, although it contains some vulgarities and obscenities, was not published and was certainly not intended for publication, at least in its manuscript form. Then, too, in every instance where there occurs one of the Wellerisms in this list of 489 proverbs and proverbial expressions, Luther noted in the margin that they were perversions and that they had their origin in the mouth of the Devil. A person might certainly be permitted to write such expressions in his own private notes without his being accused of obscenity.

These Wellerisms in Luther's works were not invented by him, but were the common property of the period. I believe that Luther noted some of these, especially those in his collection, for the purpose of condemning them at some later time, as he has done in the case of a few.

B plus volume and page number. All references to the Weimar edition of Luther's works will be referred to by volume plus page number.

¹² See *supra*, footnote 7.

Luther was a great orator and an expert analyst of the temperament of the common man. One of the main reasons for his interest in and his extensive use of the proverb throughout his writings was that he knew of their universal appeal. As Ernst Thiele in his introduction to Luther's *Sprichwörterammlung* says:

Aus Luthers verschiedenen Lobsprüchen auf die deutschen Sprichwörter ist zu entnehmen, dass ihm die ernste Lebenserfahrung, die aus ihnen spricht, wohlgefiel. Deshalb stellt er sie mit den Fabeln, die er für den Unterricht der Kinder und einfachen Leute so hoch schätzt, zusammen. Den blossen Witz, der nur Gelächter erregen soll, schätzt er nicht, darum tadelt er Agricolas Sammlung, die hierin nach seiner Ansicht des Guten zuviel tat. Auch einen andern Vorwurf erhebt er gegen den ehemaligen Freund, aus dem sein Bestreben zu erkennen ist: "Dicabatur de proverbii Iohannis Agricolae, quae magna ex parte essent insolita et nove vel ab ipso autore ficta. Frivola illa et inusitata proverbia fugienda sunt. (Bindseil, Colloquia I 423). Ging doch sein Wunsch dahin, dass jemand die Sprüche "so bei uns im Brauch sind," sammle und herausgebe."¹³

It is the folk element and the universal appeal which made the proverb so important, and one might even say indispensable, to Luther in his writings. Many of his works are addressed almost exclusively to the German people in general, not to the scholars and other educated people but to the masses. If he was to convey his meaning to these uneducated ones and to convince them that they should believe in and follow his teachings, he quite naturally had to make use of a medium of expression which would not only appeal to them, but which would also be easily understood by them. It is in doing this that Luther achieved his greatest success as a reformer and educator of the masses. Luther himself recognized the necessity of knowing how the common man spoke, in order to write good German. He insisted too on using the word which would be most truly German. In answer to criticism for not following the Latin more closely in his translation of the Bible, he answered in a vehement and humorous manner:

... den man mus nicht die buchstaben in der lateinischen sprachen fragen, wie man sol Deutsch reden, wie diese esel thun, sondern man mus die mutter jhm hause, die kinder auff der gassen, den gemeinen man

¹³ LI, 638.

auff dem marckt drumb fragen, und den selbigen auff das maul sehen, wie sie reden, und darnach dolmetz-schen, so verstehen sie es den und mercken, das man Deutsch mit jn redet . . . Als wenn Christus spricht: Ex abuntia cordis os loquitur. Wenn ich den Eseln sol folgen, die werden mir buchstaben furlegen, und also dolmetz-schen: Auss dem uberflus des hertzen redet der mund. Sage mir, Ist das deutsch geredt? Welcher deutscher verstehet solchs? Was ist uberflus des hertzen fur ein ding? Das kan kein Deutscher sagen, Er wolt denn sagen, es sey das einer allzu ein gros hertz habe oder zu vil hertzes habe, wie wol das auch noch nicht recht ist: denn uberflus des hertzen ist kein deutsch, so wenig, als das deutsch ist, Uberflus des Hauses, uberflus des kacheloffens, uberflus der banck, sondern also redet die mütter ym haus und der gemeine man: Wes das hertz vol ist des gehet der mund uber,¹⁴ das heist gut deutsch geredt, des ich mich geflissen, und leider nicht allwege erreicht noch troffen habe, Denn die lateinischen buchstaben hindern aus der massen, seer gut deutsch zu reden.¹⁵

Luther thus actually went to the market place and conversed with the common folk. Whether this was necessary in the case of such a man as Luther, with the peasant-middle class background which he possessed, is another question. The fact remains that "he practiced what he preached."

In reference to folk culture in general Luther wrote to Wenzel Link (in Nürnberg) on March 2, 1535:

Ich wil deudsch reden, Mein gnediger Herr Er Wentzel Wo es euch nicht zu schwer, noch zu viel, oder zu lang, oder zu weit, oder zu hoch, oder zu tieff vnd dergleichen etc., were, So bitt ich, wellet ettwa einen

¹⁴ William Kurrelmayer *Modern Language Notes* L (1935), pp. 380 ff., says that, though the coinage of the phrase has generally been attributed to Luther, "It can be cited . . . from the *Evangelibuch* of Johann Geiler von Kaisersberg, published seven years before Luther's New Testament:

(es habundantia cordus os loquor) wes das hertz vol ist, des loufft der mund vber."

The *Evangelibuch* was published by Johannes Pauli, first in 1515 and again in 1517, this time under the title, *Evangelia mit vsslegung*. Either of these editions could have been in Luther's hands before he began his translation of the New Testament in 1522. But it is quite probable that Geiler, and Luther independently, used a phrase widely current among the common people. Luther's words, "also redet die mütter ym haus und der gemeine man," might be construed as supporting this alternative.

A. C. Schirokauer has recently called attention to another example of the use of this proverb before Luther, cf. *Modern Language Notes*, LVIII (1944), p. 221.

¹⁵ *Sendbrief von Dolmetschen*, Vol. 30(2), pp. 637 ff.

knapen lassen sammeln alle deudsche bilde, reymen, lieder bücher, meistersenge, so bey euch dies iar her sind gemalet, geticht, gemacht, gedruckt durch ewre deudschen poeten vnd formschneider oder drucker; denn ich vrsach habe, warumb ich sie gern hette.¹⁷ Lateinische bucher können wir hie selber machen; An deudschen buchern zu schreiben lernen wir vleissig, vnd hoffen, das wirs schier so gut wollen machen (wo wirs bereit nicht gethan), das es niemand¹⁸ gefallen sol.¹⁶

This quotation gives us an insight not only into Luther's interest in the use of the vernacular, but also into his interest in the growing use of German in books and in other factors pertaining to the culture arising from the lower classes.

In view of what has just been said it might be interesting to summarize Martin Luther's progress and to note those works in which he made the greater use of proverbs. First of all, he was a peasant from peasant surroundings, then a monk like the other monks of his day, naively believing and following his teachers, reading what a monk was supposed to read and writing the scholarly style of a monk. These first writings are mostly in Latin. It is not until the monk has thrown off the fetters of convention, of scholasticism and its teachings, and has become a new man, that one can find the influence of Luther being felt actively among the people of the German nation. Now he writes German books for the folk. The use of many proverbial expressions accounts to a great extent for the now unscholarly tinge of Luther's works. The more such expressions he uses, the more the writings seem to be from the pen of a man of the people, and on the whole the more those writings seem to us today to be alive.

Luther had another reason for the use of so many proverbs aside from that of their universal appeal. It was that, since the wisdom of proverbs is generally accepted, the use of them tends to lend an appearance of greater truth and authority to the opinion expressed. There is no other device which could have been used more effectively by the reformer in order to clinch his arguments than a proverb, recognized and respected by the folk as being intrinsically true. Thus it is that we account for the frequent occurrence of proverbial expressions in Luther's polemics, both against

¹⁶ B7, pp. 163 ff.

¹⁷ Perhaps Luther was now beginning his own collection?

¹⁸ This is used jokingly instead of *jedem*.

the Catholic Church and against persons in particular. Luther seldom takes pains as to the type of expression which he uses in such cases. He merely hits upon one which is picturesque, sometimes vulgar, on which is most effective for his purpose.

Hitherto only two works have treated Luther's proverbs, namely a list of 478 proverbs compiled by J. A. Heuseler in 1824 and the edition of Luther's *Sprichwörterammlung* by Ernst Thiele, first published in 1900. Heuseler's work is woefully inadequate, containing even fewer proverbs from Luther's writings than appear in his own manuscript collection. Thiele's work is of supreme importance in any study of Luther and the proverb, but it is confined to only the 489 proverbs of the manuscript.

In my investigation of Luther's German works¹⁹ most significant was the discovery of an unexpected abundance of proverbs and proverbial expressions, amounting to a grand total of 4,987. Of this number 1,825 are proverbs, and 2,673 are proverbial expressions, the number of which might be increased by extending the definition of a proverbial expression. Included in the grand total are 80 rimes containing proverbial thought, 22 Wellerisms, and the 489 proverbs and proverbial expressions from Luther's own collection. The present discussion is taken up mainly with the 22 Wellerisms.²⁰

When one looks at the seemingly small number of Wellerisms found in Luther's works, one's first impression is that that is a minute number indeed. However, when one considers the fact that the total number of Wellerisms committed to writing and printing during the early sixteenth century is not large, that the Wellerisms are definitely not of a didactic nature, as well as the fact that Luther believed them to be a malicious work of the Devil, one realizes that 22 is rather a large number of such expressions to be found in the works of a sixteenth century religious reformer.

Below are listed the 22 Wellerisms which I have found in Luther's German works. I have attempted to explain those which seem to me to be explicable today. Some of them are obscure because of the fact that the incident in connection with which they had their origin has been lost during the past centuries. Many Wellerisms seem to have arisen in relation to a definite incident, either national

¹⁹ *Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions in the German Works of Martin Luther*, 1942, an unpublished doctoral dissertation, to be found in the library of the University of North Carolina.

²⁰ For an alphabetical list of the other proverbs and proverbial expressions see *ibid.*

or local. Some can be traced to their source, but a large number cannot. Taylor says:

Probably the life of the ordinary Wellerism is very short. An incident gives rise to a witty remark which perpetuates itself for a space of time, but when the circumstances have been forgotten or the names and persons of those concerned have ceased to be suggestive, the saying passes out of existence. Only a few Wellerisms enjoy wide currency, and these are often based on some internationally intelligible allusion or witticism so obvious that it needs no commentary. The great majority of Wellerisms probably never gain currency beyond very narrow confines.²¹

Of the 22 Wellerisms which were found in Luther's German works all except five appear in the *Tischreden*, his proverb collection, or in his letters. For the very reason that such a small percentage of them appear in any of the works which he intended should have wide circulation, I believe that we can safely assume, contrary to Taylor's statement,²² that Luther actually did believe them to be a real invention of the Devil.

*Alber: Sagt der Teufel: . . . alber fest cum braca. T5, 62; T3, 352, 8; Samml. 75.²³

In the collection the perversion is not given completely, although Luther has the marginal note: "perversa omnia a diabolo." The first part of this expression, "Alber fest," appears also in 30(2), 190, 22. The following quotation from T3, 352, where the German form appears followed by a Latin translation, fully explains the meaning:

Alber feste flickt die bruche Hose mit eyner wide Seil.
Daemon sedebat, braccam cum reste suebat:
Si non est pulchra, tamen est connectio firma.

An approximate translation: "Foolish but firm, as the Devil said when he mended the breeches with a rope."

Apfel: Nos poma natamus. 26, 546, 13; cf. T3, 546.

"We apples are in the swim too," said the horse apples floating downstream along with some real ones. The incident which gave rise to this

²¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 216.

²² See *supra*, p. 2.

²³ Key to abbreviations are as follows: *B* plus a numeral: *Briefe*, vol., page, line number. *T* plus a numeral: *Tischreden*, vol., page, line number. 1, 111, 12: volume 1, p. 111, line 12. *: When before an entry, means that this example of the Wellerism is probably the earliest that we have, i.e., that Luther was probably the first author to commit it to writing. *Samml.*: Luther's *Sprichwörterammlung*. All references are to the Weimar edition. For several of the explanations of the Wellerisms I have referred to E. Thiele and O. Brenner's edition of Luther's collection, in volume 51, Weimar edition.

expression as it is used by Luther in *Ein neue Fabel Asopi, neulich ver-deutscht gefunden. Vom Löwen und Esel*, appeared ca. September 27, 1528, written by Luther or at his behest. The reason for its being written had to do with the filth both in verse and in prose which had been directed against Luther because of his marriage in 1525 to Katharina von Bora. Luther had refused for three years even to stoop to notice the slander by honoring it with a printed answer. But in 1528 two "Magister" from Leipzig egged him on. Johannes Hasenberg from Böhmen and Joachim von der Heyden (Latin: Myricianus or Miritanus) from Friesland were the slanderers who published and sent post haste to Luther a pamphlet which appeared September 2, 1528 in the *Neue Zeitung* in Leipzig. The title of the broadside was "Ein Sendtbrief Kethen vō Bore Luthers vormeyntem eheweybe sampt eynem geschenck freuntlicher meynung tzuuor-fertigt. Dartzu eyne Bedingung auff der Wittenberger lesterschrift."

Luther gave answer in his version of the fable of the Lion and the Ass. Let us quote from it the part which has bearing here and which in the light of the preceding explanation needs no further comment. (T3, 546):

Uns wundert, das du so küne magst sein, und zu Leiptzig auff der gassen gehen, da soviel trefflicher, redlicher burger und ynn der hohen Schule so viel ausserlesene menner, Doctores, Magistri und Studenten sind, gegen welche du nicht anders bist zu rechen denn als der pferd dreck unter den öpfeln. Noch ist dein uermut so gros, das du unflat und stanck der löblichen stad und hochberühmter Schulen alleine erfür brichst und singest unter den schönen öpfeln zu Lieptzig.

This was signed: "Die Illuministen der bücher Myritoni," which is a play on the name of one of the slanderers and the Latin word for "Jackass of the Heath."

*Bock: barbati praedicant . . . Sagt der Teuffel: Wirff ein pock die stiegen hinab. T5, 62 f.

The humor of this Wellerism is evident even without any reference to the context in which it was used by Luther. However, it is interesting to conjecture. This Wellerism was recorded by Mathesius in November 1540, when he was one of Luther's table companions. It may refer to the story of the Jew Michael from Posen. As Kroke suggests (T5 xii), all that Mathesius knew about him was that he had been to church a few times in Joachimsthal and that he had been thrown down the steps of an inn by a Count. Hence it is reasonable to presume that the incident caused Luther to utter a Wellerism which was probably in vogue.

*Ehre: wie jene gute Dirne sagt: Es gehöret viel zu der ehre. 32, 499,16.

This is seemingly one of the worst Wellerisms which Luther used in any work which he expected to have wide circulation, if one considers it from a strictly moral point of view. It appears in one of his weekly sermons on Matthew 5-7 (some time between 1530 and 1532). Let us quote more fully: "Aber da ist mühe und erbeit, das es hernach gehe im leben, Und es ist warlich ein schwerer und hartes leben ein Christen odder from sein, das uns nicht wird füsse ankomen, wie jene Dirne sagt: Es gehöret viel zu der ehre. Ja freilich viel, und noch viel mehr zu einem Christen Leben.

Das bedenckt der liebe Herr hie auch, das jn so unter augen stossen und einfallen wird: Ich wol gerne so leben, es gehört aber zumal viel dazu." Luther certainly seems not to have had in mind any such pejorative meaning of the proverb as is naturally suggested by ". . . wie jene gute Dirne sagt" . . . (*als sie ihren Vater einen Dieb und ihre Mutter eine Hure hiess*, as has been suggested not only in connection with this proverbial expression, but with the entry under *lauten* below.) Certainly Luther the Preacher would not have in mind any such vulgar expression when the purpose of his sermon is to warn the Christian against allowing others' mode of living to prevent him from living as he should.

*Geld: Geld hat ehre, sprach der frosch und sas auff einem Heller. 54, 89, 16.

This rather picturesque Wellerism, which presents a quite humorous scene, has for its aim nothing more than to make more piquant the satire in Luther's discussion *Von den letzten Worten Davids*, in which he writes of the divinity of Christ. The entire tone of the little work is a very sarcastic one, as can be seen by the following quote:

Die Jüden und Türcken trefflich [ausserordentlich] hohes und vber hohes geistes hie sind und uns Christen fur grosse narren halten, Ist er Gott (sprechen sie), wie kan er als Mensch sterben? Denn Gott ist unsterblich, Ist er Mensch, wie kan er Gottes Son sein? Denn Gott hat kein Weib. Hie gehets, wie man spricht: Geld hat ehre, sprach der frosch und sas auff einem Heller. Hie leren uns die hoch, hoch, noch höher und aller höchst verstendigen Leute, die Türcken, Jüden, Dass Gott nicht sterben kan, und kein Eheweib habe, Wie wolten oder kundten wir armen Christen solch hoch ding jmer mehr [jemals] wissen, wens uns tolln Gensen und Endten [Dummköpfe] nicht solche uberaus uberhohe meister zeigten, das Gott kein Weib habe, und nicht sterben konde . . .

Luther continues in a caustic vein, a tone which appeals to the folk. This passage shows very well the master-preacher's ability to gain his point by means of sheer ridicule. He ends his exhortation to the people: "Wolan, Diese elenden narren las faren und sich klub düncken, bis sie gnug haben, Du aber halt fest am Christlichen Glauben . . ." This was published in book form in 1543.

Geschrei: Gros geschrey und wenig wolle, [sagte der Teufel, als er eine Sau beschor]. Samml, 77; Cf. T2, 649, 13 ff.

The meaning of this "perversum" is easily understood. It depends upon no particular incident for its life. This is often used by Hans Sachs. (See Handschin: *Das Sprichwort bei Hans Sachs*, p. 46.)

Gleich: Gleich vnd gleich gesellet sich gerne, etc., [sagte der Teufel] zum koler. Samml. 79.

Of course, the similarity here lies in the blackness of both the Devil and the charcoal-man. For similar use of expression, i.e., for use of expressions similar in meaning, cf. 30(2), 470, 28; 38, 85, 8; 42, 413, 8; 46, 567, 10; T2, 345, 20.

*Gott: Gott ehre das hand werg dixit lictor ad Jüristam. Samml. 80.

Since Luther's principle of arrangement of his 489 proverbs and proverbial expressions seems to have been that of free association, it would seem that this Wellerism is somewhat connected with the preceding one in so far as its meaning is concerned. As Thiele and Brenner explain: "Der Gruss ist der unter Handwerksgenossen zumal beim Besuch eines Arbeit oder Unterstützung suchenden Gesellen gegenüber dem Meister gebrauchte. Der Schinder betrachtet sich als Kollege des Juristen, beide 'schinden'."²⁴ That is, the flayer, or knacker, considers himself as belonging to the same guild or brotherhood as the lawyer, since they both "skin" their customers. Cf. the expression, also used by Luther several times in addition to its entry as number 396 in his manuscript collection: "schinden und schaben," i.e., "if one 'schindet und schabt,'" he is what we today still call a "skin-flint."

*Halseisen: Wer helt hie den andern? sprach Rost am Halseisen. 23, 36, 21 f.

Behind this expression as Luther used it here is the following incident. In 1525 Luther tried to convert King Henry VIII of England to protestantism. Erasmus probably helped the King to write his answer to the Great Reformer. The edition of the King's answer which was printed in Dresden in 1527 seemed to suggest that Luther might be decanting, hence Luther's answer entitled: "Auf des Königs zu England Lästerschrift Titel Martin Luthers Antwort. 1527 Wittenberg." A quotation of a portion from this polemic will suffice to explain the above expression:

Wen es gerewet hat, der las ab, Wer sich furchtet, der fliehe. Mein rückhalter ist mir starck und gewis gnug, das weis ich. Ob mir schon die gantze welt anhienge und widderumb abfiel, das ist mir eben gleich und dencke: Ist sie mir doch zuvor auch nicht angehangen, da ich alleine war. Wer nicht will, der lasses, Wer nicht bleibt, der far ymer hin. Wer helt die den andern? sprach Rost am halseisen. Ich kan deste frölicher leben und sterben, weil ich mit solchen gewissen lebe und sterbe, das ich ja mit allem vleiss hab der welt zu yhrem besten gedienet und die heilige schrift und Gotts wort also an den tag bracht, als ynn tausent jaren nicht gewesen ist.

Herr: Wo herrn sind, da sind decklaken S. P. Vnd [sagte der Teufel, da deckte er sich mit einem alten Sack zu].²⁵ Samml. 73.

The meaning of the part of this expression which makes up only the serious proverb is, of course, that where power and possessions are, there one always also finds every comfort and convenience. However, Luther's marginal note, "perversa . . . a diablo," which is to be understood in connection with numbers 73-80 of his manuscript collection, causes one to believe that this proverb was put into the mouth of the Devil as a perversion of the real proverb. Perhaps in addition to this meaning, the first part of the compound *Decklaken* is meant to be stressed, hinting that men of wealth and power also have much to conceal as well as the means with which to

²⁴ LI, 674.

²⁵ Seiler, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

hide it, i.e., "Money talks." Thiele and Brenner (LI, 673) suggest that the initials S. P. might refer to Simon Pistoris, Herzog Georg's Chancellor.

- *Hirsch: Ich wil sprechen wie jener Sachse sprach: Wat herte, wat hinde, ich loue from morff mit irem kinde! T3, 640, 18 f.

The following quotation from the *Tischreden* explains the actual core of this proverbial expression. "Ich wil sprechen, wie jener Sachse sprach: Wat herte, wat hinde, ich loue [lobe] fro morff [mor, Schwein] mit irem kinde! Den ein Schwein hat wurst, speck, fleisch, quae [qua] nutriunt. Omnes duces Saxoniae electores dicuntur [dicunt] carnem suillam ambire prae omnibus deliciis." Evidently pork was the favorite meat of the Saxons.

- *Hund: Ich auch, sprach der hund scilicet ad portionem. Samml. 53.

The meaning here is very clear (cf. 8, 695, 16). It is used in connection with unfair or unjustifiable claims or demands. That is, the greedy dog is unwilling to share in the labor, but says, "Don't forget me, I'm here too," when the time for dividing the fruits of the labor comes.

- Können: Wers kan, dem kompt es, sagte der Teufel, der krigte am Osterabende ein par hosen zu flicken. T3, 352, 6 f; Samml. 74.

This is another of the entries in the manuscript collection which has the marginal note, "perversa . . .". The meaning of the actual proverb is, of course: he who is an expert at any certain thing or he who has ability will get ahead in life. The "perversion" of the proverb is to be explained in connection with a braggart who boasts about some very minor accomplishment. Even the Devil might be entrusted to mend a pair of trousers, if one needed them for Easter and if every other tailor were busy. If one might be permitted to draw a modern parallel, one might think of the comedian Bob Hope's saying: "Some got it, some ain't got it; I got it."

- Lauten: Das laut, sprach jhener knecht. 30(2) 303 17/18; 37, 333, 26; cf. Samml. 202.

This Wellerism appears as such in two of Luther's works and as a proverbial expression without the *sprach jener Knecht* as entry 202 in his *Sprichwörtersammlung*. It first appears in *Vermahnung an die Geistlichen, versammelt auf den Reichstag zu Augsburg, Anno 1530*. (The reference above to volume 30 (2)):

Ja, sprichstu, Diese stück sind nu angenommen und jm teglichen brauch [i.e. among the catholics], Aber deines ist gar newe . . . Wie alt ist die walfart gen Grimtal, Regensburg, der Rock zu Trier und der gleichen viel mehr, waren sie nicht new für [vor] x, xx, xxx iaren? Wer hielt aber dazu mal widder die newigkeit? So lasse mein Euangelion doch so lange lauffen, Was gilts, es sol auch alt werden. 'Ja dein new Euangelion ist wol recht, aber es hat eine sonderliche newigkeit an sich, die nicht leidlich ist!' 'Welche ist die?' 'Ey, es thut schaden jm beutel und jn der küchen,' sagen die Tumherrs zu Magdeburg. Das laut, sprach jhener knecht, das were doch ein mal gut Deudsch, das künd man verstehen.

It appears again as a Wellerism in Luther's sermons (i.e., of March 25, 1534). Here it is used in the negative. This sermon is mostly in Latin

and therefore not originally intended for a popular audience. "Es laut nicht, dixit jhner knecht." There are many places in Luther's work where a variation of the proverbial expression appears. In most of these cases it has the meaning of "that sounds right." The following are places in Luther's works where there is a reference to this expression: 30(3), 333, 4 (hat gelaut); in the negative: 30(3), 559, 3; 576, 20; 34(2), 22, 5; 45, 155, 21; 49, 638, 16; 50, 279, 21; 314, 25; 316, 14; 336, 22; more fully and clearly: "das laut fein," 40(2), 443, 8. Thiele and Brenner in their discussion in volume 51 make the conjecture that perhaps number 139 of Pauli's *Schimpf und Ernst* had its origin in Luther's works.

Friedrich Seiler in *Das deutsche Lehnssprichwort* suggests two possible scenes called up by this Wellerism, which can be seen by adding, firstly, "hiess einer seinen Vater einen Dieb und seine Mutter eine Hure" (as under *Ehre* above), and secondly, and I think more apropos, "sprach jener Knecht, als er eine Ohrfeige bekam." It is, I am convinced, out of the question to think that Luther had the former addition in mind. It is quite possible that he had the latter scene in mind, which to us today is certainly much less vulgar and even quite delightful and humorous.

Lieb: Ein lieb sucht das ander, dixit lupus ouille rumpens. Samml. 304.

Luther probably catalogued this entry only as a "perversum" of the serious proverb: *Eine Liebe sucht die andere*, meaning that love is founded on reciprocal sympathy, that one heart is attracted by the other. The humorous element here arises from the wolf's saying this in connection with his love for lambs. In *Ysengrimus*, on the other hand, the wolf is the one devoured because of love. We might cite as related in meaning the English Wellerism: "'Every man to his own taste', said the old farmer as he kissed the cow."

*Teufel: Sagt der Teuffel . . . non semper olim. T5, 63 f.²⁶

This Wellerism appears in the *Tischreden* as a part of a list of proverbs which, according to Luther, the Devil had polluted. They were listed in connection with his criticism of Agricola's collection. There is no way of knowing exactly the full meaning of this Wellerism. Perhaps what Luther had in mind was something similar to our, "The old grey mare ain't what she used to be," (said the farmer as his horse fell down dead, or as some other comparable calamity befell the horse). Probably the Latin proverb was on a lower plane, however.

Treten: Tret keiner den andern, dixit Gallus sub equo. Samml. 370;
Cf. Mathesius's seventh sermon on the life of Luther.²⁷

This is, to the modern mind, one of the most delightful of the Wellerisms which are to be found in the literature of the sixteenth century. It certainly

²⁶ See *supra*, p. 5.

²⁷ Mathesius, Johann. *Das Leben Des theuren Mannes Gottes Doct. Martin Luthers . . . beschrieben von M. Johann Mathesio, Ehemahligen Pfarrer in St. Joachimsthal.* Frankfurt und Leipzig, 1724.

is the most charming one to be found in Luther's German works. There are in English several parallels to the German (or Latin). Cf. "Let's not kick at each other," said the rooster to the horse," as here. Or look at: "Let's not step on each other," said the flea to the elephant." Thiele in his discussion in volume 51 suggests that this one probably came from Sebastian Brant.

Übergang: Es ist ein Übergang, sprach der Fuchs. B6, 365, 16.

This picturesque proverbial expression is to be found in a letter which Luther wrote from Wittenberg on September 19, 1532 to Andreas Osiander, who was in Nürnberg. He was trying to console the latter and to encourage him with the hope that his future would be better. Luther was also sympathizing with him because of a headache of which he had complained. Let us quote: "Es kann also nicht bleiben. Mali mores parient bonas leges. Es ist ein Übergang, sprach der Fuchs: es muss der Vogel sich einmal mausen [mausern is probably intended], so krieget er wieder schöne Federn." In the word *Übergang* there is probably a pun intended, i.e., the actual *Übergang* by the body of the fox over its devoured prey and the figurative *Übergang* or transition from one state to another. At the time when Luther wrote this, it was probably clear, at least to Osiander it was, under what circumstances the fox was supposed to have given utterance to this proverb. It may have been about the following: "*Es ist ein Übergang,*" sprach der Fuchs, als er den Hasen (oder das Lamm) auffrass. Cf. the modern American: "It won't be long now," said the monkey when he got his tail in the sausage grinder (lawn mower or electric fan)."

***Unglück:** Darum sagte Claus Narr: "Das Unglück schütete mein Maul, dass es so genäschig ist gewest." T1, 521, 21 f.

In the *Tischreden* this appeared in connection with a discussion of Adam's partaking of the apple of knowledge:

Der Apfelbiss, so Adam und Heva gethan, ist ein schwer Ding gewest, wir müssen dess noch alle entgelten; darum haben die Jüden wol gesagt: "Unser Väter haben saur Weinbeer gessen, davon unser Zähne sind stumpf worden". Wir möchten wol mit unserm Herrn Gott darum rechten, aber wir haben alle den Leihkauf zum Tode getrunken. Darum sagte Claus Narr: "Das Unglück schütete mein Maul, dass es so genäschig ist gewest.

Vieh: Es ist viehe und stal, sprach der Teufel, und trieb seiner mutter eine fliegen in den hindern. 51, 522, 25 f.; 575, 2; T3, 352, 12 f. Related in meaning: Samml. 56, 79, 100, 418; 51, 553, 25.

The version which is quoted above appeared in Luther's polemic directed against Herzog Heinrich von Braunschweig, entitled *Wider Hans Worst*, published March, 1541. The reason for Luther's writing such a pamphlet had its foundation first in a quarrel which existed between Heinrich von Braunschweig and Landgraf Phillip von Hessen. In 1538 Heinrich, a member of the Catholic Liga, refused safe conduct to the leaders of the protestant Schmalkaldic League. He even went so far as to have them shot at. Toward the end of the same year Phillip captured a secretary

of Heinrich's near Kassel, took his letters, and made their contents known to various persons. They contained information concerning some destructive plan on the part of the Liga. Phillip's father-in-law, Herzog Georg von Sachsen, advised him to make an apology. Phillip did so; Heinrich replied, and Elector Johann Friedrich von Sachsen was drawn into the quarrel. There was a great deal of mud-slinging from both sides; and there was actually a lot of muck to be dug up against Heinrich as well as against Phillip.

Heinrich was in an embarrassing situation because of his love affair with his mistress, Eva von Trott. He pretended that she had died and apparently had her buried in Gandersheim with all the pomp and ceremony of the Church. He really had her hidden in the castle of Staufenburg near Seesen and was continuing traffic with her. Another matter which was meat for his enemies was his cruelty to his younger brother Wilhelm, whom he had held captive for twelve years, in order to force him to recognize their father's order of primogeniture. This caused the Catholic princes to dislike Heinrich too. In the third place, Heinrich had persecuted the city of Goslar constantly, causing the Imperial Court of Chancery to outlaw it in October 1540. He was also suspected of having instigated the arsonists who had set fire in various protestant lands. (e.g., They burned Einbeck to ashes.)

On the other side, Heinrich brought Phillip's bigamy to light and called the Elector a negligent drunkard. In other words, the quarrel went from bad to worse.

At first Luther seems to have ignored it, except in his letters. In them he aims his anger against Herzog Heinrich as the enemy of the gospel; he called him *Erzmordbrenner* in connection with the arson. But Heinrich's fourth polemical pamphlet, which was dated November 2, 1540, entitled *Duplik wider des Kurfürsten von Sachsen andern Abdruck*, and especially the remark found there, "dem von Sachsen (welchen Martinus Luther sein lieber andächtiger 'Hans Worst' nennet), zu seinen Schriften kein Ursach gegeben," caused Luther finally to answer. In this answer he turns the title which he, according to Heinrich, was supposed to have given the Elector and uses it against his opponent. It is in polemics of this type that Luther made most frequent use of the proverb, and especially of the rather crude one, as we have seen.

Let us quote from the pamphlet itself in order to get a clear idea of the meaning of this Wellerism:

Das sey dis mal gesagt von der rechten Kirchen, da von viel zu sagen ist. Wöllen sie weiter hören, wer sie sind, so mügen sie jren Heintzen weiter lassen von der sachen schreiben, weil sie keinen bessern wissen, Denn er ist ein trefflicher man, in der heiligen Schrift fertig [geschickt], behende gewandt und leufftig, wie ein Kue auf dem Nusbawm oder eine Saw auff der Harffen, der solche grosse wöl füren kan, wie jr dencken kündt. Ja, wenn es liegens, lesterns und fluchens solt gelten. Sind auch zwar wahrlich nicht werd, das sie einen bessern haben solten. Es ist viehe und stal, sprach der Teufel, und trieb seiner mutter eine fliegen in den hindern."²²

²² LI, 522.

Meaning: Such an animal belongs in such a stall. That is, the fly is too mean for any better housing, so to speak. Analogously, Heinrich is the worst possible type of man.

Wechsel: Wechsel ist kein raub, dixit fur pediculo posito in locum equi furto ablati. Samml. 369.

Meaning: Clear from its humorous use. "Fair exchange is no robbery," said the thief as he stole the horse and left a louse in its place."

*Zeug:²⁹ Zeugk macht meister, sagte der Teuffel, schindet ein kue mit eynem nebriger [Bohrer]. T3, 352, 7 f.; Cf. Samml. 78, which has the marginal note: "perversa omnia a diablo."

This expression is listed in a group of proverbs which are termed "ironica" by Luther, in other words, which he considered as the work of the Devil.³⁰ This list follows, as quoted from T3, p. 352:

Dixit de ironiciis proverbii: Wers kan, dem kompt es, saget der Teuffel, der krigte am osterabende ein par hosen zu flicken. Zeugk macht meister, sagte der Teuffel, schindet ein kue mit eynem nebriger. Alber feste flickt die bruche mit eyner wide.

Daemon sedebat, braccam cum reste suebat:

Si non est pulchra, tamen est connectio firma.

Es ist das vihe im stalle wie der wirth, sagt der Teufel vnd jagte seiner mutter eine flige in arsch.

Notice how closely parallel this passage is to entries 73-78 in Luther's *Sprichwörterammlung*. They must have been made at approximately the same time. The entry in the *Tischreden* comes some time between October 27 and December 4, 1536 and was made by Anton Lauterbach, one of the most reliable of Luther's table companions in so far as concerns his reports of Luther's sayings. Notice also that here in the *Tischreden*, which were of the nature of a diary and consequently not intended for publication, that the cruder term *arsch* is used for *hindern*.³¹

Meaning: Accomplishment depends largely upon the method by which a thing is attempted. Cf. also under *Können* above.

Emory University at Oxford

²⁹ Of the 22 Wellerisms which are listed above five are not to be found in K. F. W. Wander's *Sprichwörterlexikon*, and consequently may possibly make their first appearance in writing in Luther's works. They are those listed under the following key words: 1) Geld; 2) Hund; 3) Teuffel; 4) Unglück; 5) Zeug.

³⁰ See *supra*, p. 5.

³¹ Cf. *supra* under *Vieh* and *Alber*.

EVENTFUL HAPPENINGS AMONG THE MODERN FLORIDA SEMINOLES

by

Robert F. Greenlee

When the time of childbirth draws near a crude shelter is built a short distance from the Indian settlement. In those camps in the swamp the shelter is roughly thatched with palmetto fronds on top and on the sides nearest the settlement. The back of the shelter is left open to the swamp. For those camps located along the Tamiami Trail a length of canvas is often substituted for the palmetto thatching. This improvised shelter has a floor covered with a layer of palmetto fronds topped with a few rags which serve as the mother's only protection from the dampness of the ground.

At the actual delivery the mother grasps a stake which has been driven into the ground for this express purpose.¹ She must remain in the seclusion hut for four days after the birth, and her food is prepared separately and brought to her on special dishes. During the seclusion she is considered unclean and nobody except her immediate family may visit. When the mother returns to her dwelling and assumes her usual duties food must still be cooked separately and eaten apart from the rest of the family for four additional months. Indian women doctors take care of the mother during the birth and seclusion time.

The care of the children rests largely on the mother, though frequently a father will rock the cradle or take the child for a walk. A cradle which is made of cloth is swung like a hammock from the rafters of the *chekee*, or dwelling. Every child wears a bag filled with herbs tied with a string about the neck. These bags are supposed to afford protection and to prevent the child from running into danger.

Children have few duties and are allowed to play at will about the camp when their mothers are closeby. Little boys have sling shots constantly about their necks and often play with toy carts and tiny autos tied to strings. Small boys play ball with round wooden sticks, knocking the ball back and forth to each other. At times they play a racquet game similar to that enjoyed by adults at the

¹ For the custom in 1880 see MacCauley, Clay, *The Seminole Indians of Florida*, (American Bureau of Ethnology, Fifth Annual Report, Washington, 1884), p. 497.

annual Green Corn Dance. At an early age boys learn to pole the dugout canoes in the canal and how to spear fish in this same canal which flows past their camps.

Small girls are almost without exception well behaved and not so mischievous as boys. They spend their time helping their mothers with tasks such as stringing beads, sorting scraps of cloth, aiding with basketmaking, and tending the young children. Frequently little tots play tag or fondle one of their disheveled rag dolls. Often they swim in the nearby canal.

Children make settlements in miniature in imitation of the real ones. A village of this sort was made at Guava Camp, deep in the Big Cypress swamp. Here children made several small dwellings and had twigs placed in a wheel-shaped position to represent fire logs. A ribbon of white sand meant for a road led up to the small village and extended in the opposite direction to the *chekees* of Guava Camp proper.

Education among the Seminoles is still a haphazard affair. A father usually instructs his sons in the crafts which men pursue as adults; a mother pays attention to her daughters, teaching them how to sew, string, and do other household duties. Schools run under the auspices of the United States Government are at work on the Cow Creek Seminole Reservation near Brighton.

Among the Seminoles, as maturity approaches, courtship becomes a time of significance. When a woman is eligible and wishes to attract attention, she wears lots of beads and puts on a number of beaten-out silver ornaments on her blouse. These are made from silver dollars, fifty-cent pieces, and dimes which have holes bored in them to permit them to be strung on strings. When the couple is ready to become married they talk the matter over with the leaders of the clans involved, since the Seminoles are divided into clans in which descent and the clan name are inherited from the mother's clan. All the clanspeople have a confab to decide whether the choice is acceptable, and each one must pass on the suitability of the intended husband. The father of the girl is likewise consulted. If no objection is raised, the marriage takes place.

The women folk on the groom's side supply the meager trappings for the bed. Further, the groom supplies blankets, pots, pans, beads, and money. These are turned over to the bride's clan. Then some of her relatives make a new shirt for the groom. The boy at marriage takes up residence with the clansmen and at the settlement of his bride. Marriages are thus given official recognition only after

the payment of a dowry or "bride price." After marriage a man is obliged to work for his bride's entire family. If the hunting around the camp is good, man and wife may stay at her people's camp for many years, but if no sufficient opportunity is offered to secure a livelihood they may find an unoccupied camp site in the vicinity and construct a new settlement.

When a wife dies her husband must first seek a new wife among her clanswomen. Thus the clan of the dead wife has first claim on the marriage choice of the former husband.

Divorce is uncommon, and the separation requires no ceremony. If the couple have lived at the wife's father's camp, the husband simply leaves—his wife and children remain with her people. Should the couple have made a camp of their own, the wife and children return to her clan camp. Reasons for divorce are incompatibility or merely a preference for somebody else. Incompatibility appears to be the chief trouble, and no stigma is attached if this reason is the true one. The Seminoles are reputed an extremely moral tribe, hence leaving a spouse for the sake of another is frowned upon greatly. Divorce is uncommon, in spite of the ease with which it may be obtained.

A variety of forms of recreation and entertainment have developed. Chinese checkers had a real following and many camps have used phonographs and a number of old records. Mountaineer music and swing are favorites. By far the most important single recreational activity for men is drinking. No occasion slips by without a demand for whiskey. Strict laws prohibit the selling of liquor to Indians, but the practice persists in spite of the rule. We were told that they induce negroes living in the vicinity to buy spirits for them, and some bootleggers sell intoxicants unlawfully to the Indians in the Everglades.

The Green Corn Dance is the principal ceremony among the Florida Seminoles and affords them recreational diversion once a year. Although many of the customs are of recent origin, the Green Corn Dance by way of contrast, is a very old observance. It is not confined to the Seminoles and has constituted an intimate part of the ceremonial life of the Creek Indians, the Alabama tribe, as well as the Cherokee and Natchez, who took on the dance late in their existence. The Seminole dance is derived from the Creek busk ceremony. The word busk is derived from *boskita* meaning to fast, and is an integral part of the ceremony which marked the old Creek new year. Variations of the Green Corn Dance have been given

year in and year out among the Florida Seminoles as well as among the Timuquans, who preceded them on the Florida peninsula.

The separate rites which compose the dance are both old and widespread among the original peoples of the Southeast. One such practice is the taking of an emetic. The wellknown cassine or *ilex vomitoria* is employed as emetic at the Green Corn Dance. This shrub, which is none other than the familiar holly, is found along the sea coast of the two Carolinas, Georgia, and northern Florida. The French writer Bossu speaks of the use of cassine among the Alabama tribe, who roasted the leaves to make a tea and drank the infusion in the ritual of many ceremonies. The Creeks, also, were inveterate cassine drinkers. They referred to it as *asi* instead of the usual popular expression "black drink." The Creeks likewise had a religious belief that the *asi* used at the busk had the following properties:² It purified them from all sin and left them in a state of perfect innocence. It exalted them with invincible daring in war and was a means of cementing friendship.

Another important feature of the Green Corn Dance is the ceremonial scratching which occurs just before the Feather Dance on the second day of the ceremony. Scratching of this sort was known among the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Yuchi, and Catawba tribes in particular. In the Cherokee instance ball players are scratched on their naked bodies with a bamboo brier having stout thorns. This left broad gashes on the backs of the victims.³ Among the Seminoles snake fangs are inserted into a wooden holder and is used to scratch the assembled members. Different purposes for the scratching are as punishment of children, relief of fatigue, and the cleansing of the body from impurities as in the case of the Green Corn Dance ceremony.

Aside from its purely ceremonial purpose the Green Corn Dance is a time for council meetings. All the troubles of the old year, with the exception of murder and any serious infraction of the marriage rules are forgiven. One rule, that of marrying into the clan of one's mother, since the Seminole count descent not from both sides of the family as with us but only on the mother's side, is particularly guarded against. Any infraction here cannot be simply wiped away by the repentance at the Green Corn Dance.

² Swanton, John R., "Creek Religion and Medicine," (Forty-second Annual Report of the American Bureau of Ethnology), p. 538.

³ Mooney, James, "The Cherokee Ball Play," *American Anthropologist*, III, 105 ff.

An additional function of the meeting is the naming of youths who have come of age. Remember that an Indian name is more than a label, it is a distinct part of his personality just as much so as are his eyes or his teeth. He believes that injury will result from the wrong handling of his name just as readily as a wound inflicted on some part of his body. Thus the small rites accompanying the dances which occur on the last night of the Corn Dance serve to give the young members of the tribe their ceremonial names. This clan name they then bear for the remainder of their lives. Only medicine men or other important personages receive further honorary names.

The ball game at the Corn Dance which I witnessed in the Big Cypress swamp in May, 1939, had little definite form. It was played in the quiet periods between the ceremonies of more serious import. The object was to send the ball hitting against an indented mark cut some six feet up on a twenty-foot pole. Making a charcoal mark on the pole for each hit registered constituted the method of scoring. Most of the time the boys and girls just played in a formless and desultory fashion—tossing the buckskin ball around aimlessly. On several occasions when the game assumed a more serious character the boys played with small gut-thonged racquets while the girls used their bare hands.

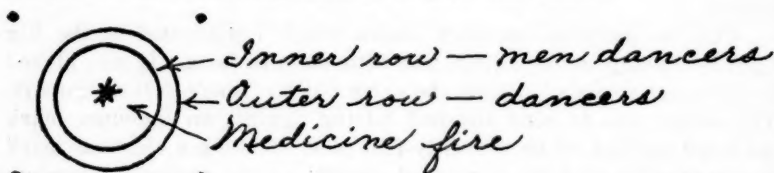
In the evening the so-called stomp dances took place. They had little form and were mere survivals of dances which probably had much significance earlier in Seminole history. The first dance was the Catfish Dance which was soon followed by the Hair Dance. The latter is probably a survival of the scalp dance which was given earlier in the Southeast when Indians referred to the scalp as "hair." The Alligator Dance and the Buffalo Dance were also given. Other dances often rendered at the Green Corn Dance are Rattlesnake Dance (*cinti chobi talellwi*), Switchgrass Dance (*pahi loci talellwi*), Redbug Dance (*waski talellwi*), and Rabbit Dance (*cokfi talellwi*).

While dancing the women wear rattles made out of tin cans punctured and filled with pebbles. The rattles are tied to the leg just above the ankle. The men carry palmetto fronds in their hands and a few merely held sprigs of bush which they carried in a similar manner.

During the evening dances one Indian acted as fire tender and announcer. He stood within the bough-decked ceremonial lodge on the east end of the ceremonial grounds and called out the names of the dancers who were to participate in a coming event.

Of all the dances the Feather Dance is the only one which merits special notice. It is danced in the morning and immediately after lunch on the last day of the ceremony. Each participant held white egret feathers attached to a long thin pole. The pole thus adorned was carried over the left shoulder. No women were allowed to take part in the Feather Dance.

The men went around the ceremonial grounds making four steps, one at each corner. They stopped at the corner, shook their rattles and then let out a short piercing whoop. The ceremonial ground was occupied in the following manner to give this dance:



At three o'clock the same afternoon the men retired to the same ceremonial grounds near the ball game pole to take the "black drink." This emetic is now composed of six ingredients. Without warning the ceremonial scratching with snake fangs set in a scratching instrument resembling a pocket comb began. First the men pulled up their trousers to the knees and rubbed medicine on their legs. After this they hastily went into the nearby sawgrass to inflict another series of scratches upon their legs just below the thigh and in the shin region as well. Boys received scratches on their fore and upper arm. After the scratching the men went further into the sawgrass. Vomiting ensued for such was the instantaneous effect of the emetic they had taken so soon before.

The Green Corn Dance had little else to recommend it to the visitor. There was a feast, participated in by all, in which large slabs of beef were eaten. Another event was the eating of *kumpti* a food made from a root resembling cassava. It was also rather interesting to see the women grind the new corn meal in the old stump grinders which the Seminoles and other Southeastern Indians used for so many years.

During our stay in the Everglades a burial took place at Imokalee and was rather instructive in regard to the survivals of earlier customs. On the tenth day of November, 1938, John Billie died at a temporary camp in Everglades City. The Indians were shrewd enough to bring this sick person here so that he would die

in a settlement which was deserted most of the time and thus obviate the necessity of abandoning one of their established camps according to tribal custom. During the night of the tenth the body was placed in a far *chekee*. It was rolled in canvas shortly after death, the eyes were closed and the mouth tied shut.

On the morrow the women of the settlement appeared with their hair down. This is an ancient Seminole mourning fashion. They were the three sisters of the deceased. Suddenly the corpse, still wrapped in canvas, was brought from the settlement. The cloth was lashed with rawhide to a long pole at three points. The body was quietly placed in a wooden coffin and mortuary offerings placed beside it. These consisted of a plate, a basin, and a cup. All of them were broken according to the belief that material objects have spirits which must be released just as a person has a soul which is released at death. This belief seems quaint and senseless to us but it persists among primitive peoples in spite of its futility. Leaves of the bay tree (*toli*) were placed in each corner of the coffin.

Since the burial in this instance was in accordance with Christian rites, an Episcopal service with some abridgements was read at the grave. But the Seminoles acted just like any other mourners. Only at the end of the ceremony when the Christian burial rites go "ashes to ashes and dust to dust" did the Indians pay any attention. Then three Seminoles present threw some bay leaves into the coffin.

A widow remains in a ritually unclean state for an indefinite time; her hair is let down and her beads are removed. She reenters her normal participation in affairs only after becoming ceremonially readmitted at the Green Corn Dance. Widows are obliged to eat by themselves. At the Green Corn Dance a widower strips the old clothes from a recent widow, throws them away, and reclothes her in a new costume. The mourning time for both men and women is four months. At this time she cannot change her clothes and wears them till they are virtually in shreds. A medicine man is selected to make medicine for the widow's soul and the soul of the deceased all through the day of the funeral and chants are sung to relieve the sting of suffering from the family of the dead person.

The formal mourning takes place for four days and is connected with the medicinal practices of these people. At sunset for three days medicine is sprinkled throughout the camp. On the fourth day the second soul, for the Seminoles believe in the idea of a double soul, leaves the body and all are assured that the person is at last entirely dead. From this time on mourning ceases and members

of the family return to their usual occupations. On the day of the funeral and for three ensuing days thereafter members of the dead person's immediate family remain at home and refrain from work. It was the old rule that settlements were abandoned after death, but this practice is less stringent at the moment and was not done after the death of either of the two people who were given burial rites during our stay in the Everglades region.

Daytona Beach, Florida

WILLIAM FAULKNER AND THE SOUTHERN FOLK

by

John Miller MacLachlan

I

Nowhere can the critic find a more disturbing writer than William Faulkner. His novels, like his talents, defy description. His styles — not style — of writing vary abruptly and with sharp departure from convention both in vocabulary and in rhythm. His world outlook is essentially as romantic as that of Stark Young, yet his presentation of it often outdoes the realists. Virginia Woolf in *Mrs. Dalloway* produced a far less baffling "stream of consciousness" than the opening pages of *The Sound and The Fury*. The last chapter of *The Unvanquished* ("An Odor of Verbena") follows Marcel Proust in attaching poetic recollection of things past to the human sense of smell. The love affair of Ike Snopes, the idiot, with a cow is as vast an exaggeration of the myth of the "poor white" as any Erskine Caldwell has conjured. Grudge-bearing, barn-burning Ab Snopes is as harsh a study in aggressive frustration as one could find in the psychiatrist's clinic. Yet the Old South of the Graustarkian era of American fiction was scarcely more suffused with moonlight and magnolias than the past reflected in the *Jefferson* cycle of novels.¹

With all this, Faulkner drives professional critics to paeans² or to wails³, or else to become as involved and as paradoxical as the novelist himself.⁴ The essential conflict between his outlook and his literary method, his reverence for the elder code and his distaste

¹ Joseph Warren Beach, in *American Fiction 1920-1940* (Macmillan, N. Y., 1941), p. 128, lists these as *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), *As I Lay Dying* (1930), *Sanctuary* (1931), *Light in August* (1932), *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *The Hamlet* (1940). Although they purport to be laid elsewhere, *Soldier's Pay* and *Sartoris* seem to be palpably tales of Oxford.

² Joseph Warren Beach, *op. cit.*, is most appreciative in "The Haunted South" (pp. 123-145) and "William Faulkner: Virtuoso" (pp. 147-169).

³ Harry Hartwick, for example, in *The Foreground of American Fiction* (American Book Co., N. Y., 1934) is forced to report that Faulkner is "The *reductio ad absurdum* of American naturalism" (p. 160).

⁴ Review articles contemporary with the publication of the novels, as one might expect, have this tendency. See for example reviews in *The Bookman*: Alan Reynolds Thompson, "Sanctuary: A Review" (LXXIII, 188, April, 1930); Granville Hicks, "The Past and Future of William Faulkner" (LXXIV, 17, Sept., 1931); Marshall L. Smith, "Faulkner of Mississippi" (LXXIV, 417, Dec., 1931); cited in Hartwick, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-166.

for its contemporary fruit, his stark brutality in some passages and his extraordinary delicacy in others, must always prevent any easy literary generalization about him as an artist.

As a producer of "sociological documents," however, he is somewhat easier to examine. This follows for several reasons. He writes of the folk of a sharply limited area in Mississippi; he writes of them from a consistent viewpoint, that of the endemic but detached aristocrat; and lastly, he presents a viewpoint that begets a relatively uncomplex interpretation of the social order which surrounds his *personae* and infuses it with a limited variety of castes and kinds of folk and an even more limited reference to the outer world. The major difficulty, indeed, is less that of understanding his sociological representations than of finding quotable passages which give them explicit voice. Nearly every paragraph in the *Jefferson* novels depends upon those which precede or, and almost equally often, those which follow, for its meaning. This makes quotation awkward. One needs to cite the whole of *The Unvanquished* or *Absalom, Absalom!* to show how and why they adorn the legend of the lost gentry, or of *Sartoris* or *Soldier's Pay* to demonstrate the cultural confusion brought about by the impact of World War I upon Civil War social attitudes. At least in implication, *Sanctuary* is a diatribe upon the metropolitan age, but one cannot isolate a page to prove it so.

The task nevertheless is not impossible. Intricate as his individual characters may be, however labyrinthine the plots through which they move, the pattern of the culture is clear cut enough to show through, and the vertical cleavage of the folk quite explicit. There are the descendants of the gentry and their ancestors; the "redneck" Snopeses and the like, grubbily ambitious white hill folk; the "poor whites" who are their pitiful cousins, stubborn and malleable as infants, whose prevailing trait is frenzied good nature, whose fate is unendingly to be cozened or beaten. Beyond are faithful black servitors who attend the gentry, and beyond them the nameless *Afro-Americans* who are bullied or lynched or exploited by the "rednecks." Twice (*Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*) the esoteric tragedies of miscegenation are brought to front and center.

Jefferson, Mississippi, is the hub of the province and therefore at last of the modern world. A thinly disguised Oxford in a palpable Lafayette County, it is distinguishable from the real town chiefly because Faulkner has moved the University a variable number of

miles away.⁵ The hills are to the eastward, the plantation country to the westward, the intermittent erosion of the brown loam hills a photographic fact, and the scattering of abandoned or dilapidated mansions are to be seen for the looking.

The significant people of Jefferson, those whose doings preoccupy or bemuse or instruct or lead the others, are the members of a few great clans. The Sartorises, the Sutpens, the Compsons, and their in-laws live upon recollections of past glory and in an interminable perplexity produced by the wish to remain patrician after having become something else. They are locked in mortal—and losing—social-economic combat with the rednecks, they ignore the poor whites as would any *grand seigneur*, they are lost in the bitter introversions of decay.

The rest of the folk, of either race, seem meaningful only as they impinge upon the lives of these gentry, or as their ways and doings contrast with the ways and doings of the gentry. As for those novels which appear not to deal with Jefferson, one who rereads them after the Jefferson series feels inescapably that they fall into two groups: those which test the outer world by Jefferson (*Mosquitoes*, *Pylon* and *The Wild Palms*) only to find it even more futile and less justifiable; and those two (see footnote, p. 153) which simply change its name.

One dares to suggest that this formula amounts to an inversion of the Southern scene of fictional tradition. For glorification of the gentry there is substituted here acid regret. Instead of being strong, sure of themselves and lordly, the aristocrats are of all the most pitiable and confused, while genuine nobility and surety are found in negro characters (Dilsey in *The Sound and The Fury*, Ringo in *The Unvanquished*) or in plain white folk. Faulkner's gentry look upon their own fatal weaknesses as virtues, and upon the triumphant strength of the rednecks as petty inferiority. Women are more prescient and stronger than men, the weak stronger, the stronger weak. All accordingly is paradox, the world turned upside down. Life is a tragedy whose main theme is the downfall of the gentry at the hands of the rednecks, and the tragedies of individuals are results of the sociological cataclysm. Strong negroes play the *choros*, and "poor whites" supply that comic relief intrinsic to Greek drama.

⁵ Hartwick, *op. cit.*, p. 161, reports "After the Armistice he spent two years at the state university, and then returned to Oxford, where he lives today on his own farm." To make such a return one walks across a bridge.

II

Within a sociological as perhaps opposed to a literary conception we may fairly regard the gentry of the plantation South as possessors of a "folk" culture. Any distinct variant from prevailing national- or regional-cultural profiles, induced by geographic isolation or cultural insulation or both together, justifies such a classification. The second differentiating force, that of cultural insulation, has been particularly effective in the development of the plantation subregions, especially because the ethnocentric tendency has been encouraged among the cavalier gentry by the accolade of much of the outside world. Moreover, an economic-geographic factor—viz., the simultaneous need for flat, fertile lands to support the plantation's high true costs of production, and ability of the planters to outbid the small uplands farmers for the black prairies and the broad river lands—has made a spatial separation from the upland Southerners as definite as the cultural gulf between them.

No one who is at all acquainted with the interior Southeast denies the reality of the caste. The planters are affirmed by a score of historians and a cohort of contemporary travelers to have begun an indigenous way of life, considerably similar to that of the British landed gentry, as early as the first generations of American colonization. If a critic holds that their lineal descendants are numerous beyond possibility today, this is only another way of saying the tradition has been maintained, however self-consciously. To bring up the Census of 1860 (a remarkable social document in its own right) to show that large plantations and slave holdings were not then relatively numerous is in effect to lay a basis for demonstrating that the plantation economy has persisted, and in the appropriate subregions, even expanded, spectacularly in the upper delta of the Mississippi.

There is thus no argument as to the historicity of the backgrounds of the *Jefferson* drama. The question of its present sociological authenticity thereupon becomes pertinent. To accept Faulkner's work in this aspect one would need to begin by conceding that the caste as a whole, or at least its more sentient members, are headed for Gehenna in a high-wheeled hack, and to continue by acknowledging that this is the most meaningful trend in modern Southern life. Indubitably the *Jefferson* narratives present it so; the destruction of persons of a lower order is treated as bitter comedy or with clinical objectivity, but tragedy among the elite quite otherwise:

"There. One I give to you to wear tomorrow (it will not fade), the other I cast away, like this"—dropping the crushed bloom at her feet. "I abjure it. I abjure verbena forever more; I have smelled it above the odor of courage; that was all I wanted. Now let me look at you." She stood back, staring at me—the face tearless and exalted, the feverish eyes brilliant and voracious. "How beautiful you are: do you know it? How beautiful: young, to be permitted to kill, to be permitted vengeance, to take into your hands the fire of heaven that cast down Lucifer. No; I. I gave it to you; I put it into your hands; Oh you will thank me, you will remember me. . . ." ⁶

These words tell Bayard Sartoris, protagonist of the cavalier theme, to kill his father's murderer. The tone of high poesy they strike is reserved for "quality" (as slick-paper serials call the gentry), and is relied upon by the novelist to convey an impression of cultivation of manner and speech. It is and will, one supposes, remain a mystery that so many critics could have written so many words about the *Jefferson* novels without commenting upon the emotional attitude towards the older gentry, amounting almost to reverence, that burns in them.

For reasons which can only be guessed at the male protagonists of the planter-caste, however lengthily treated, generally impress one as posturizations rather than as persons. The women on the other hand are fully realized, Rosa Millard, the "Granny" of *The Unvanquished*, perhaps more than any other.

It was a big blank account book; it weighed almost fifteen pounds. They opened it on the reading desk, Granny and Ringo side by side, while Granny drew the tin can out of her dress and spread the money on the book. But nobody moved until she began to call out the names. Then they came up one at a time, while Ringo read the names off the book, and the date, and the amount they had received before. Each time Granny would make them tell what they intended to do with the money, and now she would make them tell her how they had spent it, and she would look at the book to see whether they had lied or not. And the ones that she had loaned the brand-blotted mules that Ab Snopes was afraid to try to sell would have to tell her how the mule was getting along and how much work it

⁶ *The Unvanquished*, p. 274.

had done, and now and then she would take the mule away from one man or woman and give it to another, tearing up the old receipt and making the man or woman sign the new one.⁷

Here we see associated together the integrity (rather than honesty, for Granny was a thorough-going Robin Hood who stole from the Yankees to provide for her flock), the responsibility, the paternalism of the caste, with the docility tradition assigns to their followers. For the most part, one derives inferentially the picture of the cavalier caste, which is the most vivid single recollection of the series. When in *Absalom, Absalom!* it is made explicit through the two youthful—and unceasing—conversationalists, the effect is not fortunate. Here and there, however, is a photographic detail:

... and which Granny called the library because there was one bookcase in it containing a Coke upon Littleton, a Josephus, a Koran, a volume of Mississippi Reports dated 1848, a Jeremy Taylor, a Napoleon's Maxims, a thousand and ninety-eight page treatise on astrology, a History of Werewolf Men in England, Ireland and Scotland and Including Wales by the Reverend Ptolemy Thorndyke, M.A. (Edinburgh), F.R., S.S., a complete Walter Scott, a complete Fenimore Cooper, a paper-bound Dumas complete, too, save for the volume which Father lost from his pocket at Manassas (retreating, he said).⁸

One misses only the Latin and Greek classic, which mayhap the young cavaliers left behind when they departed from college, keeping only sufficient recollection of them to name a town or impale a moment in history.

The relationship between cavalier *personae* and their slaves is dramatized most effectively in Ringo, the slave boy of *The Unvanquished*, and Dilsey of *The Sound and The Fury*. Of the latter: when Jason Compson threatens to whip his niece Quentin,

"I ain't gwine let him," Dilsey says, "don't you worry, honey." She held onto my arm. Then the belt came out and I jerked loose and flung her away. She stumbled into the table. She was so old she couldn't do any more than move hardly. But that's all right: we need somebody in the kitchen to eat up the grub the

⁷ *The Unvanquished*, p. 157.

⁸ *The Unvanquished*, p. 18.

young ones can't tote off. She came hobbling between us, trying to hold me again. "Hit me, den," she says, "ef nothin else but hittin somebody won't do you. Hit me," she says.⁹

One sees here at least a suggestion of the "mammy" of cheaper fiction, albeit a characterization that has the ring of truth in it. Elsewhere Faulkner comes closer to the cliché in treating his negro characters as a "child people" who nonetheless possess that prescience which literary tradition assigns to the very simple:

Benjamin the child of mine old age held hostage into Egypt. O Benjamin. Dilsey said it was because Mother was too proud for him. They come into white people's lives like that in sudden sharp black trickles that isolate white facts for an instant in unarguable truth like under a microscope; the rest of the time just voices that laugh when you see nothing to laugh at, tears when no reason for tears. . . .¹⁰

The unequal equality, the friendship which neither forgets nor recalls the fact of race, between the planter-squire and his servant has always been as baffling to the uplands Southerner as to the non-Southerner. That it has existed and that it persists in some measure today cannot be denied, nor can one ignore how Faulkner weaves it into the fulfillment of tragedy:

Ringo was waiting; I remember how I thought then that no matter what might happen to either of us, I would never be The Sartoris to him. He was twenty-four too, but in a way he had changed even less than I had since that day when we had nailed Grumby's body to the door of the old compress. . . . He was sitting quietly in a chair beside the cold stove, spent-looking too who had ridden forty miles (at one time, either in Jefferson or when he was alone at last on the road somewhere, he had cried; dust was now caked and dried in the tear-channels on his face) and would ride

⁹ *The Sound and The Fury*, pp. 229-230. Parenthetically one wonders whether the strength of the characterization of Dilsey is associated with the dedication of *Go Down, Moses* (Random House, N. Y., 1942) (a collection of related short stories): "To Mammy Caroline Barr, Mississippi (1840-1940), who was born in slavery and who gave to my family a fidelity without stint or calculation of recompense and to my childhood an immeasurable devotion and love."

¹⁰ *The Sound and The Fury*, p. 211.

forty more yet would not eat, looking up at me a little red-eyed with weariness (or maybe it was more than just weariness and so I would never catch up with him) and then rising without a word and going on. . . .¹¹

Ringo has come to accompany his master on the journey to that manslaughter which everyone expected from the man who had suddenly and violently become the Sartoris. On their way back to Jefferson:

Maybe it was the tears, the channels of dried mud across which his strain-reddened eyes had looked at me, but I rather think it was that same quality which used to enable him to replenish his and Granny's supply of United States Army letterheads during that time—some outrageous assurance gained from too long and too close association with white people: the one whom he called Granny, the other with whom he had slept from the time we were born until Father rebuilt the house. We spoke one time, then no more: "We could bushwhack him," he said, "like we done Grumby that day. But I reckon that wouldn't suit that white skin you walks around in."¹²

Perhaps no more apposite paragraph occurs anywhere in the *Jefferson* writings in *re* the paternalistic race equation. In a brief space the novelist has reaffirmed the paradoxical intimacy that is created between a man who has no fear of losing caste and one who has no expectation of gaining it, has demonstrated the simple directness of thought of the servant, has vouched for the community of thinking and feeling between the two, and has reassured the reader that the relationship is a stable one in which none forgets his place. It is a tribute to his literary economy that it takes more words to describe than Faulkner required to depict so much.

X The negro whom Faulkner regards as important, besides the faithful servant, is the mulatto, the hybrid whose existence in itself affirms the breaking down of what the servant would uphold, the cultural framework presumed to keep the races in both spiritual and biological segregation despite any personal association. To Faulkner the hybrids are figures of unmixed tragedy. In *Absalom, Absalom!* one phase of that tragedy, the one which occurs when the hybrid strain is reintroduced into white stock, is the inner mystery of destruction. In *Light in August* it is otherwise: we are offered

¹¹ *The Unvanquished*, p. 248.

¹² *Idem*, pp. 250-251.

inferentially two tragedies, the conflict between two "bloods" in one body, a sort of a biologic apocalypse, or else the frustration of a man who can find no place for himself in white world or black.

Unfortunately nothing in *Light in August* tells us explicitly which of these is the writer's hypothesis and which is introduced in support of it. The sociological alternative, however, seems finally to have the burden of the "internal evidence" in its favor. It is at least certain that Joe Christmas' odyssey, up to and almost including his lynching, suggests and implies his sense of revenge against the whole social order, rather than against the dominant race in that order, responsible for the anomaly of his existence. It is also true that in this story Faulkner becomes "sociological" in the lesser sense, that of conscious and apparent protest against the failings of society, more fully than in any other of his writings.

The little white folk of the *Jefferson* cycle are almost all oafs or yokels. As *I Lay Dying*, even though the novelist is said¹³ to consider it his best work, may fairly be looked upon as a period piece, one of those high Rabelaisian comedies which steeped the masses of rural white Southerners in ironic pity during the early 1930's and which Mr. Erskine Caldwell continues to produce as did James Branch Cabell his *Jurgen* after the fashion for fantasy had passed. It is said the event around which *As I Lay Dying* is written occurred, as it does in the story, some years ago. Whether or not, this is true, it is an episode which would be looked upon with as much disbelief by the ordinary people of Mississippi as by any intellectual. Such obliviousness to the import of death and such preternatural concern with trivial things in its presence has about the same relation to the culture of the little folk of the Southern countryside as have the recent snake-cult episodes.¹⁴ The latter, dramatizing some remote cult, appear as barbarous to the standard protestant Southerner as if the episodes had taken place among the Southwestern Indians or some distant Asiatic tribe. If such people bear no resemblance, in respect to attitudes towards death, to cultivated Southerners, they resemble even less the unsophisticated to whom the supreme tragedy is of overwhelming importance and dignity, a constant religious and poetic preoccupation.

Except for certain incidental characters, one finds the ordinary man possessed of dignity mainly in the convict story "Old Man" in *The Wild Palms*. Even his dignity is that of passivity in frustra-

¹³ Harry Hartwick, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

¹⁴ See *Associated Press* releases, week of August 24 - September 1, 1945.

tion, and is suffused with a simplemindedness for which only a current slang phrase, "out of this world," suffices. Two considerations enter his mind. One is that renunciation of this sorry world, to be achieved only by return to the penitentiary, is the least of all evils. The other is that he has been betrayed by the clever people of earth, especially the writers of detective fiction,

— the writers, the uncorporeal names attached to the stories, the paper novels — the Diamond Dicks and Jesse Jameses and such — whom [sic] he believed had led him into his present predicament through their own ignorance and gullibility regarding the medium in which they dealt and took money for, in accepting information on which they placed the stamp of verisimilitude and authenticity . . . he had saved the paper-backs for two years, reading and re-reading them, memorizing them, comparing and weighing story and method against story and method. . . . And then when the day came, he did not even have a chance to go through the coaches and collect the watches and the rings, the brooches and the hidden money-belts, because he had been captured as soon as he entered the express car where the safe and the gold would be. He had shot no one because the pistol which they took away from him was not that kind of a pistol although it was loaded . . .¹⁵

One of the surest devices in this narrative, as elsewhere when the "poor whites" (distinguished as already suggested from the venal, sure-purposed "rednecks") are under the microscope, is the turbulent style through which their befuddlement is impressed upon the reader. Capable of as sharp and clear writing as any living novelist, Faulkner uses this technique to give one an unspoken sense of their incapacity for rational action, an incapacity which is directly produced by the fact that life is much more complex than the cortical resources of such people.

Exactly the same point is made in "The Peasants," the genuinely hilarious fourth novelette of *The Hamlet*. A collection of dead and useless Texas ponies is sold to the yokels by Flem Snopes. Not only are they bought; their hapless purchasers risk life and limb—at least one man is cripple and another stunned—and spend days of valuable time trying to corral them. The literature of the English language offers few comparable examples of wholehearted and futile abandon.

¹⁵ *The Wild Palms*, pp. 23-25.

Idiocy appears as the last extreme for both the declining gentry and the "poor whites," and is thus an organic part of the whole theme of the novels. Benjy Compson and Ike Snopes ("Ike H-mope" in his own pronunciation) symbolize the several tragedies of the two castes, but while Benjy is focal to the case-study of the degenerate aristocrats, Ike is no more than an intervening footnote in the conversion of his tribe from "poor white" to "redneck" status, a lingering evidence that disaster flows in this blood also. Flem Snopes exalts the ugly and desperate escape from the process of degeneration in sharp contrast to Ike, and in a very real sense completes the damnation of his kind.

Such is the sociological landscape of the province whose center is Jefferson. The role of the gentry in holding it together and in giving it such meaning and purpose as it has is implicit in the whole series. Their awareness of this role is as apparent in their attitudes towards the small white folk as in their attitudes towards the negroes:

One of the Governor's young men arrived at the penitentiary the next morning. That is, he was fairly young (he would not see thirty again though without doubt he did not want to, there being that about him which indicated a character which never had and never would want anything it did not, or was not about to, possess), a Phi Beta Kappa out of an Eastern university, a colonel on the Governor's staff who did not buy it with a campaign contribution, who had stood in his negligent Eastern-cut clothes and his arched nose and lazy contemptuous eyes on the galleries of any number of little lost backwoods stores and told his stories and received the guffaws of his overalled and spitting hearers and with the same look in his eyes fondled infants named in memory of the last administration and in honor (or hope) of the next . . .¹⁶

This sense of mastery must not be supposed, however, anywhere to overcome the equal sense of failure and doom which, if it is most highly vocal in the Compson children, is still present in the rest of the caste . . .

I am dont cry Im bad anyway you cant help it
theres a curse on us its not our fault is it our fault
hush come on and go to bed now
you cant make me theres a curse on us¹⁷

¹⁶ *The Wild Palms*, p. 325.

¹⁷ *The Sound and The Fury*, p. 196.

The preceding is part of a hysterical conversation between Caddy (Candace) and her brother, a conversation which utilizes half a dozen devices to reinforce the reader's conviction that these indeed are accursed people. The borrowing from the experimentalists in such a passage is deliberate and serves the purpose of throwing the reader into the same sense of unreality which overcomes the hysterical actors. It is not an incidental demonstration that other people than e. e. cummings can get along without capitals and punctuation, others than Gertrude Stein without transitional phrases, but a part of the onomatopoeitic sub-structure of the whole book.

The same sense is offered tritely where triteness is appropriate to the character speaking:

"and Gerald's grandfather always picked his own mint before breakfast, while the dew was still on it. He wouldn't even let old Wilkie touch it do you remember Gerald but always gathered it himself and made his own julep. He was as crotchety about his julep as an old maid, measuring everything by a recipe in his head. There was only one man he ever gave that recipe to . . ."¹⁸

Again, plaintively,

"I know you have to slave your life away for us," she says. "You know if I had my way, you'd have an office of your own to go to, and hours that became a Bascomb. Because you are a Bascomb, despite your name. I know that if your father could have foreseen. . . ."¹⁹

Or ironically:

But Father said why should Uncle Maury work if he father could support five or six niggers that did nothing at all but sit with their feet in the oven he certainly could board and lodge Uncle Maury now and then and lend him a little money who kept his Father's belief in the celestial derivation of his own species at such a fine heat. . . .²⁰

¹⁸ *The Sound and The Fury*, p. 184.

¹⁹ *Idem*, p. 225.

²⁰ *Idem*, p. 218.

III

"Progress" and "retrogression" are companion trends, both always at work in any society. What matters in the long run is the preponderance of forces supporting or undermining the prevailing institutions, and this balance remains most difficult to measure. The historical method, that of waiting out the epoch and assaying what has happened after a sufficient lapse of time, is scarcely available to a contemporary critic of the Faulknerian pessimism. The sociological technique of measuring such changes in the social order as can be reduced to quantitative units, likewise, suffers a serious disability.

As long ago as 1853 Arthur de Gobineau²¹ demonstrated that the stability of a society is not necessarily associated with the data of social welfare, a conclusion which is independent of the racist conclusions towards which it led de Gobineau. Similarly Adolphe Coste, in his failure to make his case,²² exposes the difficulties inherent in trying to fix a relationship between the objective, measurable aspects of a culture and the imponderable ideological aspects. Moreover, the arbitrary assumptions one must make in order to discuss "progress" are distasteful to the trained scholar.

Granting all this, it remains true that the available evidence does not support the idea that the Southern regions are in a state of cultural decay. As for the "little folk," we have abundant proof that their health, their literacy, their efficiency as farmers and the level of quality of their religious and political behavior have all improved greatly during the present century. The provincial isolation of their past has very largely surrendered to modern technology. The poverty of mind and of purse associated with them is under attack from a dozen directions and often with telling effect.

Moreover, the present-day descendants of the old gentry appear, as far as lay evidence suffices, to be getting along very well. The plantation subregions of the South are, by and large, areas of economic and cultural growth; and in changing its methods and products the plantation, especially in the favored subregions of Mississippi, is demonstrably a going concern. It is true, of course, that dysgenic trends also exist. Rural slums, great areas of submarginal farming,

²¹ Count Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 2 volumes, (Paris, 1853 and 1855), Vol. 1, esp. Ch. II.

²² Adolphe Coste, *Les principes d'une sociologie objective*, Paris, 1899, and *L'expérience des peuples et les prévisions qu'elle autorise*, Paris, 1900. His thesis is summarized excellently in Pitirim Sorokin's *Contemporary Sociological Theories*, (Harper & Brothers, N. Y., 1928) pp. 359-370.

strains and contradictions of interest in the industrialization of the region, and serious social disorganization in the metropolitan cities where penniless backwoods emigrants gather continue to provide serious problems.

One may say, then, that the only possible justification of Faulkner's viewpoint would be that, as in the Rome of the early Empire, progress in the measurable things of this world may conceal fatal flaws in the great fundamentals of the culture, flaws which the novels of the *Jefferson* cycle search out and dramatize. The weakness of his work, then, is this: that nowhere in the volumes under discussion does one discover the drama, perhaps the tragedy, of the world at large today, that greater course of events upon which hinge the fates of all the regions of earth. If the future of the folk of Mississippi is dark now, it is not chiefly because there are black sheep among the cultivated people or grasping shysters at large among the little folk. Instead, it is because the provincial culture lacks strength to withstand the onslaughts of sweeping change in the years to come, change which must originate elsewhere. The folk culture of the region survived with remarkable vitality the stress-filled years of the Civil War and the Reconstruction. Can such a strain, or one like that which grips Europe and Asia as these words are written, now be withstood?

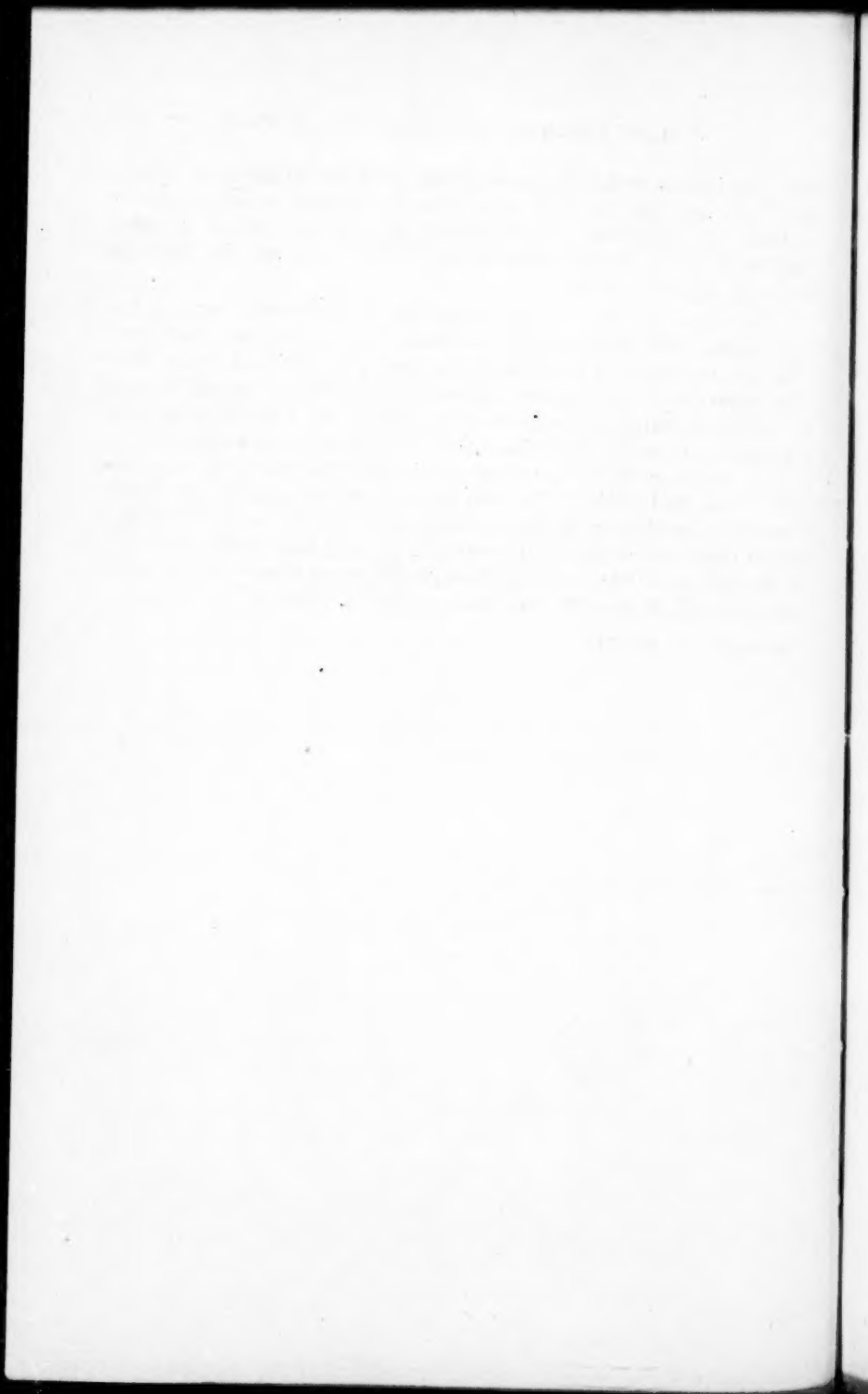
If Faulkner neither asks nor answers this question, the fault appears at last to lie in the fashion in which naturalism and neo-realism have been imported into American letters. The injunction to write about what one knows can be overdone and can limit the fulfilment of the artist's abilities. James Farrell's repetitious probing into the ways of frustrated Irish youth in Chicago, Sinclair Lewis' twenty years of perturbation over the man of success-at-any-price, Erskine Caldwell's pentalogy of the depraved "poor white," all exemplify what has been called the "microcosmic fallacy" of naturalism. It is both strange and regrettable that this error leads towards a picturization of contemporary culture which can be called only caricature, that even the merely physiological facts of the lives of characters should in it achieve far sharper focus than the great issues of their times and the great cultural forces around them.

Whatever their faults, one could wish that Hardy, Bennett, Galsworthy and their kind instead of the French schools had been the models on which William Faulkner's novels are patterned. The insistence of naturalism upon pure narrative prevents that creative disquisition through which the realists gain so much, and the full

characterization which one must judge to be the hallmark of mature art. One has only to read in parallel two related novels, such for instance as *Barchester Towers* and *Elmer Gantry*, to see at what cost the deftness of naturalism is bought, how insubstantial its treatment of cultural forces.

One supposes that the major portion of Faulkner's writing has been done. His latter works (in order *Pylon*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, *The Unvanquished*, *The Wild Palms* and *The Hamlet*) show signs of a departure from the limitations of naturalism, a rising sense of the cultural matrix of individual experience, a diminishing of that dependence upon the shocking which so plagues Zola's descendants. It is to be hoped that the novels of his maturest years will continue this trend, and with it the realization that the provincial drama, however excruciating, is always peripheral; that in a world of nuclear fission there are no out-of-the-way places; and that while one treats of the age in which one lives through the scene where one knows it best, one still deals with the whole of man's universe.

University of Florida



SCRAPS OF SOUTHERN LORE

by

Grace Partridge Smith

Fragments of Southern lore have been reclaimed by the writer at different times and in different sections of the Middle West from persons who have lived or are still living in the South. Even though these odds and ends have been "picked up" in states other than those to which they are native, most of them are patently Southern. It would certainly appear incongruous to report such items as examples of folklore from the states in which they were gathered.

Rather than discard these bits, they have been arranged below in a sort of medley which may, perhaps, claim attention as an aid in a "chinking-in" process attendant upon a final framework of Southern lore. Certain variations from standard versions in a number of included items, may serve to show again how time and place contribute individual or community changes to old-time folk patterns.

Chronologically, the fragments, as recorded here, represent periods from the middle 1800's to the present, portraying through phases of social, religious, and economic life some of the beliefs, customs, and superstitions of the area from which they stem. At core, many of them point to older origins, and it will be noted that, with few exceptions, Old World motives bolster the garner.

Prefatory remarks attached to each item presented are intended to be suggestive rather than exhaustive. Titles have been given by the writer. For convenience, the material has been grouped by states, as follows:

I—ALABAMA

The Ghost Rider

This is one of the almost infinite number of graveyard tales dispersed throughout many lands. In spite of its brevity, our story shows several clear-cut motives: (1) the Sindbad motive; (2) inability to dismount; (3) the demon horse. Cf. Thompson, *Mts E* 262, F 472; also, Chauvin, *Bibliographie*, VII, pp. 23, 67. The motives are common in European legend. Cf. A. H. Krappe, "Le Légende de la Fin du Roi Théodoric," *Le Moyen Age*, XVIII (1928), pp. 190-207. Poe utilizes Mt. 3 in his story, "Metzengerstein." Cf. my article in *Modern Language Notes*, June, 1933, pp. 356-359.

Informant: Mrs. James England, of Carbondale, Illinois. She was born on her father's Forest Hill Plantation in Big Will's Valley, not far from Collinsville, Alabama. She heard this story from one of her father's slaves, Aunt Tildy.

A darkey was going through a graveyard at night when a ghost got after him as the darkey was riding on his mule. The ghost jumped up behind him on the mule and run him and run him so he couldn't do anything about it. He couldn't get off. The ghost like to run the mule to death, for the ghost had control of him.

II—LOUISIANA

1. River Chantey

The bit below may have been part of a river chantey used in early steam-boat races on the lower Mississippi. Interest attaches to several lines: For line 3 cf. a stanza-refrain in Harold W. Thompson's *Body, Boots, & Britches*, Philadelphia, 1940, p. 209; a similar one to line 6 occurs in a stanza of "Dixie," in Stark Young's *A Southern Treasury of Life and Literature*, New York, 1937, p. 221; in line 7 the animistic conception of the sea, itself very old, is transferred to the boat. Cf. M. Oldfield Howey, *The Horse in Magic and Myth*, London, 1923, pp. 147-148; Paul Sébillot *Le Folk-Lore de France*, Paris, 1905 (Tome II, *Le Mer et Les Eaux Douces*, p. 10).

Informant: Mrs. Christopher Queen at Iowa City, Iowa. Her father heard it in New Orleans in 1847.

The Captain on the quarter-deck,
Heaving up the lead;
"Fire away, my bully boys,
The other boat 's ahead!
Whoop jamboree, whoop jamboree;
Vinegar shoes and paper stockings,
Get up, old Horse!"

2. A Story Beginning

Variety in openings are legion, though the familiar "once upon a time . . ." probably leads in the practice of the American story-teller. Our example may be compared to the first lines in "The Wife and Her Bush of Berries" in Robert Chamber's *Popular Rhymes of Scotland* (*Works*, VII, p. 209). There are other similar beginnings which mention monkeys and ducks.

Informant: Mrs. Queen (born Lucinda Duncan). Her father was from the north of Ireland and was probably familiar with common Scottish tradition.

Once upon a time,
When pigs were swine,
And turkeys chewed tobacco,
And old men's beards were as long
As today and tomorrow . . .

3. Juba Song

In rhythm with the dance, slaves in evening quarters "patted Juba" (clapping the hands and patting the knees) to the cadences of the Juba song. Variants

of these lines are found in numerous collections: Newman I. White, *American Negro Folk-Songs*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1928; Dorothy Scarborough, *On the Trail of Negro Folk Songs*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1925; T. W. Talley, *Negro Folk Rhymes*, New York, 1922; Christy's *Panorama Songster*, especially the numbers, "Virginia Juba," "Walk in, Joe," and "Jim Crow's Ramble." Besides a taste for 'possum fat, negroes are said to be partial to kidney fat to which they attach superstitious notions (Cf. Frederic Gerstäcker, *Narrative of a Journey 'Round the World*, New York, 1854, pp. 395, 431).

Informant: Mrs. Queen.

Juba this and Juba that,
Juba 'round the kidney fat;
Fat is good to grease shoes,
Shoes is good to dance in.

Refrain:

Walk in, Jube, an' I'll be a friend,
A long way to travel,
And not a cent to spend.

Juba went to the garden gate,
Couldn't get in; he was too late.
Ate a whole leg of mutton,
Never stopped to pick a bone . . .

III—MISSISSIPPI

1. The Hawkstone

For similar uses of "scarecrows," cf. Carl Carmer, *Stars Fell on Alabama*, New York, 1934, p. 284; Newbell Niles Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, Chapel Hill (N. C.), 1926, p. 323.

Informant: Mrs. William Land, of Carbondale.

In the Middleton family there was a flint arrowhead, long, slender, and finely wrought. The family firmly believed that if the arrowhead was put in the fire or in the hot ashes that it would drive away the hawks. It showed distinct signs of such usage. If any of the family saw hawks circling around the barn, they would hurry to put the arrowhead in the fire.

2. Horse Magic

The father's reaction, recorded below, may have been an inspiration, but it was more likely grounded in some subconscious tradition (the family was of English extraction). Whether he was aware of it or not, certain it is that the plan of burying the pony—to be followed with magic results—points to ancient credulities and customs connected with the horse (head, skull, etc.) as luck-bringer and fertility mascot. Such ideas prevail in England, Germany, and

elsewhere. Cf. Robert Means Lawrence, *The Magic of the Horseshoe*, Boston, 1898, *passim*; Frazer, VIII, p. 43, n.1.

Informant: Lt. Aubrey C. Land, of Carbondale.

In recalling a boyhood in the deep South, Lt. Land tells of a pet pony of which he was very fond. The animal was his care and delight, but one day it died. His grief was uncontrolled at the loss of his playmate and his tears almost unquenchable. Finally, his father said, "We'll bury the pony under the apple tree; it will make the *bitter apples sweet*." This consoled the lad, if anything could.

3. "Moonshine" Song

The admonition to "moonshiners" is from Starksville and from a negress named Ora Lee Love, who called herself a "Saint," being a member of Holiness Church.

Informant: Mrs. Sherman Barnes, of Carbondale.

God don't like it, I know!
 God don't like it, I know!
 You'd better stop that drinking 'shine
 They say that yellow corn
 It makes the very best kind.
 You take that corn and
 Make it into bread,
 An' stop that drinking moonshine.

4. Resurrection Motion Song

As the singer mentions each bone, she touches it. *Necker* means "connected"; i.e., "connected to me."

Informant: Mrs. Barnes.

These bones goin' 'er rise again:
 Arm bone necker to me,
 Leg bone necker to me,
 Head bone necker to me,
 Breast bone necker to me . . .
 (continued *ad lib.*)

5. Sight-Seeing in Heaven

Like many negro religious songs, the text can be prolonged almost indefinitely as long as ideas and words hold out.

Informant: Mrs. Barnes.

Question: "Why don't you set down, Preacher?"
 (Addressed consecutively to "Deacon,"
 "Mourner," "Sister," "Brother," and so on.)

Answer: No, I tell you, I won't set down,
I just got to Heaven an' I want to look around,
I want to walk all around,
I want to walk all around.

6. A Riddle

Obviously, this "neck" riddle is eighty-odd years old, if not more. Its pattern is familiar. Here a slave has asked his master for his freedom. It will be granted if the slave can propose a riddle that his master cannot guess. The riddle, as given, baffled the master and the slave gained his freedom. It is said to be common throughout Mississippi.

Informant: Mrs. Land, of Carbondale.

If he come, he no come,
If he no come, he comes.

Answer: If the crow comes, there won't be any corn;
If the crow doesn't come, the corn will come.

7. Wood-Chopping Song

Sung by a gray-bearded negro as he swung his ax in Batesville many years ago. For similar refrains, cf. Howard Washington Odum, and Guy Benton Johnson, *Negro Workaday Songs*, Chapel Hill (N. C.), 1926, p. 120; Ethel Park Richardson and Sigmund Spaeth, *American Mountain Songs*, New York, 1927, p. 89; Joel Chandler Harris, *Nights with Uncle Remus*, New York, 1911, p. 63, (in "Brother Rabbit Breaks Up a Party").

Informant: Lt. Land.

I'se goin' to Crowder,
An' get me a fiddle,
An' a bow . . .
Diddy-bum, diddy-bum,
Diddy-bum, bum, bum . . .

IV—TENNESSEE

A Blessing — Tennessee Style

Half serious, half playful, this realistic "grace" has been used for years by one particular family in middle Tennessee. Others in the neighborhood are said to have adopted it.

Informant: Miss Sarah Gaut, of Nashville.

Lord, make us able,
To eat all on the table;
Everything, but the dishrag,
And the ladle.

Carbondale, Illinois

NOTICES

The following open letter to folksong collectors has been received in the office of SOUTHERN FOLKLORE QUARTERLY. The editors of the QUARTERLY urge readers who have folksong collections to furnish Dr. George Herzog with information concerning their collections in order that this worthwhile project may be all inclusive.

Dear Folksong Collector:

I am bringing up to date for the American Council of Learned Societies in Washington, D. C., my survey "Research in Primitive and Folk Music in the United States" which appeared as the Council's Bulletin No. 24 in 1936 and is now out of print. This survey attempts to give a picture of the serious interest in this country in primitive and folk music, as it is reflected in various activities and materials. It includes data which refer to traditional music in this country as well as data which refer to materials gathered by Americans elsewhere. It lists information primarily on non-commercial phonograph recordings, notations of melodies, and publications.

I would very much appreciate it if you would be good enough to give me the data pertaining to your collection, with the approximate number of records or notations, whether published or not, and their provenience according to State, region, minority group, or tribe. Also general type, for example, whether chiefly vocal or instrumental music, secular or religious, balladry or other, etc. In connection with the recordings I would appreciate information whether copies of the material are deposited elsewhere, and whether the cylinder material has been re-recorded on disks.

Let me thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

GEORGE HERZOG
Department of Anthropology
Columbia University
New York 27, New York

Mr. Robert Price, Department of English of Ohio State University, is making a study of the Johnny Appleseed tales current in various local communities. He would like to have notice of variants of the Johnny Appleseed legend.

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